



March 13 2006

The Honorable Lorence Wenke  
State Representative  
N-997 Anderson Building / P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

RE: INCLUSIVE HOME DESIGN ACT, HB 4138

Dear Representative Wenke:

AARP Michigan supports the "Inclusive Home Design Act," HB 4138. We are committed to the concepts of universal design in all homes in Michigan. The ability to remain at home is important to AARP: we have committed considerable resources to promoting and creating homes and communities that are both livable and accessible for older people. No fewer than 82% of older people want to remain at home as they age, according to our survey. In addition, more accessible housing will eventually reduce the health care dollars that are unnecessarily spent to support people at more intensive levels of care than would be needed if they were to stay at home.

The universal design elements recommended in HB 4138 would allow people who develop mobility limitations to have the ability of staying in their own homes rather than having to move to an institutional setting. The IHDA would require MSHDA to ensure that 50% of all new homes that it funds after January 1, 2007 be "visitable," meaning at least one no-step entry and wide enough passage for a person in a wheelchair to access a first-floor bathroom. It is *revenue neutral* and is *not an unfunded mandate*, since tax dollars are already going to build these homes.

Major benefits for passage of IHDA include:

- Taxpayers who pay for this housing will be able to get into them to visit their loved ones and network with job /business prospects at informal social events.
- Lost-time injuries and workers compensation claims from falls on steps will be reduced.
- Hospital discharge planners could safely send people with mobility impairments home, not to nursing homes at a base cost to taxpayers of \$4,710 month, plus medications and treatment. For more info: <http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/longterm/Articles/a2003-10-30-dailycost.html>.
- Cost of making a new home visitable is minimal or nonexistent, while the cost of retrofitting a home with steps to make it visitable after construction is often prohibitive. For more information, see [www.concretechange.org](http://www.concretechange.org).

This bill already enjoys bipartisan support and endorsements from key organizations including MSHDA, CEDAM, Michigan Paralyzed Veterans Association (MPVA), Michigan Association of Centers for Independent Living (MACIL), and Michigan Disability Rights Coalition (MDRC).

In addition, the bill enjoys support around the state from bankers, builders, developers, and moving companies, as well as advocates for people with disabilities.

Increasingly, people with discretionary income are building accessibility into their homes. This bill would offer the same benefit to people who rely on MSHDA for adequate housing. This would help to even out the playing field and to help Michigan to join the movements in Great Britain and Sweden who are leading the world in legislation that mandates accessible housing.

Please join us at AARP Michigan in supporting this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anita Salustro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Anita Salustro  
Associate State Director for Livable Communities  
AARP Michigan